A rather common feature of ‘Arabic English’ is what can be called misplaced accent. A closer look at such instances of misplaced lexical accent suggested the presence of neat patterns. Native speakers of Arabic do not accentuate English polysyllabic words with a haphazard choice of the syllable to be accented. This suggestion led to an analysis of hundreds of Arabic polysyllabic words. This analysis consisted of asking a number of unsophisticated native speakers of Arabic to pronounce Arabic polysyllabic words. The analysis led to the division of Arabic syllables into light and heavy (laghu and guru as described in the ancient Indian work, Taitreeya Praatishaakhya [𑀴𑀢𑀠𑀠 IPv-a], a phonetic treatise of the Yajur Veda). Analysing Arabic polysyllabic words as being made up of light and heavy syllables helps us establish
rules for word-accent in Arabic. This analysis established the fact that in Arabic, syllable-weight determines lexical accent. This paper first establishes the importance of word-accent both for English and Arabic for the criterion of intelligibility of words and then gives an account of the types of Arabic polysyllabic words analysed and the results obtained.

Keywords: Word-accent, syllable-structure, light, heavy and superheavy syllables.